ROBERT BROWNING AND THE ENGLISH PRE-RAPHAELITES.

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LIFE.

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Among English Professors and Fellows I have had the privilege of studying under, I acknowledge peculiar indebtedness to Messrs. Herford, Snow (St. John's, Oxford) and Napier. To Professor Herford's lectures on Morris I owe my earliest interest in the English Pre-Raphaelites.

Among Professors of Breslau University my quite special thanks are due to Prof. Prof. Dr. Dr. Koch and Sarrazin.

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BROWNING AND THE ENGLISH PRE-RAPHAELITES.

But the spiritual father of the new Romanticists in England, though possibly neither he nor they knew it, was, we believe, Robert Browning — Quarterly Review, July, 1896.

Scattered surmises of Browning's influence upon Pre-Raphaelite artists occur in various monographs and studies dealing with the Pre-Raphaelite movement in its individual or corporate character. W. M. Rossetti acknowledges some amount of influence upon his brother's work, A. C. Benson, Rossetti's most recent biographer, the same; Arthur Symons in An Introduction to the Study of Browning instances influence upon William Morris, Robert Steele, who treats Morris in the revised edition of Chambers's Cyclopædia, does so too; Esther Wood in Dante Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement allows some indebtedness in Rossetti's case and W. Hamilton in his sketch of the Æsthetic Movement, which in its earlier stages he identifies with the Pre-Raphaelite, finds characteristics of Æstheticism in Browning.

That writers of whom these mentioned are only a selection, in noting influence do not all detect it in the same places, opens a possibility that the phenomenon is more diffused than they think. The writer on Rossetti in The Quarterly Review for July, 1896, hazards the conjecture with which I have prefaced this essay, that Browning was the Pre-Raphaelites' spiritual father. It will palpably repay investigating to what extent Browning served as inspirer and model, if he did not, like Ruskin, stand sponsor, to the Pre-Raphaelite group.

That there was a direct cult of his verse in the circle of Rossetti admits of no doubt: the introduction to the

fac-simile reprint of The Germ of 1850 states it in so many words: "The profound cultus of Browning commenced by Dante Rossetti had permeated the whole of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and formed not less than some other ideas a bond of union among them".

This statement from W. M. Rossetti, who is more than anyone else the chronicler of the movement, puts Browning in a light that is new to many even of his admirers — as an object of faith to these brilliant enthusiasts — and gives the meetings of the group a fresh interest to students of nineteenth century literature, as the first Browning society.

Recalling the unpopularity and only late-arriving popularity of Browning, one realises how this admiration had something of the fervour of an esoteric cult: indignation at prevailing insensibility to the merits of their hero sharpened appreciation. A definite instance of such whetting occurs in Rossetti's letters of 1855 to Allingham: "I'm afraid The Heretic's Tragedy rather gave me the gripes at first, though I've tried since to think it didn't, on finding The Athenæum similarly affected."

In 1847, just as the two Rossettis commence their discipleship, Browning is hard up for appreciators; "he's a pleasant fellow, has few readers, and will be glad to find that you admire him" writes Leigh Hunt to Allingham.

In 1850, when Tennyson takes the laureateship, "few readers have ever heard of Browning".

In 1855 to D. G. Rossetti "the comparative stagnation, even among those I see, and complete torpor elsewhere, which greet this my Elixir of Life, are awful signs of the times."

In 1856 the Rev. R. A. Willmott, getting out a volume of selections entitled The Poets of the Nineteenth Century — a volume still in print — proposes to exclude Browning altogether. It is D. G. Rossetti who clamours for his insertion, offering to illustrate him.

In 1856 we find Rossetti laying siege for a whole night to John Ruskin in favour of Men and Women; with the result that Ruskin sends a bulky letter next morning to be forwarded to Browning. Rossetti trusts Ruskin told Browning he was the greatest man since Shakespeare.

In 1856 Brimley reviews Browning unfavourably in Fraser's Magazine. The indignant Rossetti calls him "the cheekiest of human products."

In 1860 we find Tennyson recommending Men and Women to the Duke of Argyle, a keen Tennysonian, but no easy convert to the cult of Browning.

In 1869 Old Fitz (Fitzgerald) still keeps up his fire of unsympathetic growls at Browning and all his works, in The Athenæum.

It is only in 1881 that Furnivall and others found the Browning Society.

The Cult.

In the years 1844—7 Dante Rossetti was a semi-idolater of Miss Barrett, who within this same period became Mrs. Browning. His study of Robert Browning really commenced in 1847.

Says his brother, "Everything took a secondary place in comparison with Robert Browning". "If at this date" —1847— "Rossetti had been accomplished in the art of painting, he would have carried out in that art very much the same range of subject and treatment."

In 1849 Rossetti visits the Louvre with Holman Hunt. The sonnet recording the visit ends,

> And no man asks of Browning; though indeed
> (As the book travels with me) any fool
> Who would might hear Sordello's story told.

In May, 1849, Rossetti recites lots of Patmore, Browning, Mrs. Browning etc., at Batemans.'

In Nov., 1849, there is an argument among the brotherhood as to whether Browning would be the man some twenty years thence.

In Nov., 1849, Patmore thinks Browning does not value himself at so high a point as he is rated by the two Rossettis.

In 1850 we have the publication of The Germ, in the articles of which the cult of Browning is further visible: —

Tupper refers to Sordello in The Subject in Art.

Stephens in his article on Modern Giants refers obviously to Browning. "Visibly in his garden walketh God", is quoted from Sordello.

W. M. Rossetti devotes an article to Christmas Eve and Easter Day. He admits that Browning's style is methaphysical, complicated, and obscure, but he adds — "when a man of genius, as Browning undoubtedly is, writes a poem, or Wagner composes an opera, it is at least worth while to discern the beauties they contain before we pronounce an opinion against them."

In April, 1850, the Tupper family live through a whole act of Paracelsus and several of Browning's lyrics, for which Gabriel is called on by John Tupper.

It is in the summer of 1850 that Rossetti unearths an anonymous poem called Pauline, in the British Museum, and charges Browning with the authorship.

In November, 1850, Woolner and W. M. Rossetti fight fiercely for Tennyson and Browning, against Cave Thomas, Dickinson and Madox Brown as champions for Byron, Pope etc.

In Nov., 1850, Patmore is more impressed with Browning's Christmas Eve and Easter Day, without exactly knowing what to make of it.

A rhymed letter by Dante Rossetti to John Tupper, written about April 1850, had contained,

> I guess I'm half a quack;
> For whom ten lines of Browning whack
> The whole of the Zodiac.

Referring to 1854 W. M. Rossetti writes, "Rossetti in all these years half worshipped Sordello and thrust it down everybody's throat."

Of these same years Stephens writes, "It was with regard to poems of Browning's that Rossetti chiefly exercised his prodigious power of reading aloud and the gigantic resources of his memory. Nearly all the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, except perhaps Collinson, were sympathetic adepts in reading aloud, but none of them approached Rossetti, whose musical, modulated, and sonorous voice still rings in the ears of those who remember with what vigour, spirit, and poetic appreciation the dear comrade of those days took part in reading thus." Rossetti's memory, he informs us further, would miss nothing in sequences of a dozen pages each, from Paracelsus or Sordello. Holman Hunt also tells us of Rossetti's giving Sordello and Paracelsus, by forty or fifty pages at a time.

In Nov., 1855, the two Rossettis are engaged on Men and Women. Dante Gabriel has read it three times and gives his favourites. "What a magnificent series," he writes, "is Men and Women! Of course you" (Allingham) "have it half by heart ere this."

Bishop Blougram's Apology is one of the poems eagerly discussed by Morris's set in Oxford in 1856.

In 1856 D. G. Rossetti writes, "of course I've been drenching myself with him" (Browning) "at intervals since, only he gets carried off by friends."

In 1856 we find Rossetti writing to Allingham, as to one of the only men who'd be really in his mood of receptiveness in regard to Browning; he speaks of his brother's intensity of fellow-feeling on the subject. Masson's article on Browning in The British Quarterly Rossetti finds thoroughly appreciative, but slow.

In 1856 Rossetti shows Browning Miss Siddal's illustration of a scene from Pippa Passes.

In 1856 Burne-Jones is introduced to Rossetti and hears him rend to pieces some one present for having spoken disrespectfully of Browning's Men and Women; and still in the same year Morris writes that his group

know Rossetti now as a daily friend, and Browning too, who is the greatest poet alive.

Morris in his article in The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine counts Browning high up among the poets of all time and scarce knows whether the first or second in his own.

In 1867 W. M. Rossetti agrees to write for The Broadway, a New York magazine, on Browning.

He writes on Browning in a Swinburne pamphlet in 1868.

Swinburne, in his critical essay on Chapman, in May, 1875, defends Browning against the charge of obscurity.

In 1871 Rossetti writes that Browning seems likely to remain with all his sins the most original and varied mind by long odds which betakes itself to poetry in our time.

Personal Intercourse.

Personal intercourse between the Pre-Raphaelites and Browning opens when Rossetti writes to Browning in the summer of 1850. Two years later Rossetti calls with Allingham upon the Brownings.

On Sept. 27th, 1855, the Brownings, being for a while in London, invite two or three friends to 13 Dorset Street to meet Tennyson, who had undertaken to read aloud his poem Maud, recently published. The audience was a small one, the privilege accorded to each individual all the higher: Mr. and Mrs. Browning, Miss Browning, D. G. Rossetti and W. M. Rossetti, and either Madox Brown or Hunt or Woolner. After Tennyson and Maud comes Browning and Fra Lippo Lippi — read with as much of sprightly variation as there was in Tennyson of sustained continuity.

In Nov., 1855, D. G. Rossetti is just back from a ten days' trip to Paris: the Brownings are there for the winter: they have been previously some time in London, where Rossetti has seen them a good many times "and

indeed may boast of some intimacy with the glorious Robert". Browning has written Rossetti's name in a copy of Men and Women brought for the purpose. The time with Browning at Paris has been most delightful, both in the evenings and at the Louvre, where (and throughout conversation) Rossetti finds his knowledge of early Italian Art beyond that of any one he ever met — encyclopædically beyond that of Ruskin himself. He learns that all pictures desired in Old Pictures in Florence are in Browning's possession in fact.

Rossetti meets the French critic Milsand at Browning's house in Paris.

Rossetti mentions Mrs. Browning's delightful unliterariness, shown by her leaving Tennyson, Browning, W. M. Rossetti and himself to discuss the universe while she entertains two very ordinary callers in another room.

In Dec., 1856, D. G. Rossetti writes: "The Brownings are long gone back now, and with them one of my delights — an evening resort where I never felt unhappy. How large a part of the real world, I wonder, are those two small people? — taking meanwhile so little room in any railway carriage, and hardly needing a double bed at the inn".

D. G. Rossetti's friendship with Browning comes to an end through a wild suspicion that in some lines of Fifine at the Fair (1872) an attack is levelled at him.

In these extracts there is admiration of the man Browning, a decided cult of his writings and some amount of personal intercourse, but no sort of concern on his part to found a literary school. In the first place he lives too much abroad to do so; but, in the second place, there is something formal about the intimacy between him and his admirers. The association lacks the freedom and abandon that one finds in the friendships of Carlyle and Tennyson; or of Tennyson and Fitzgerald, where Alfred strolls in unconventionally habited, chats over the fire, spreading his known big hand out to the blaze, and

smokes infinite tobacco. Patmore is conscious of Browning's inaccessibility when he dubs him much more a man of the world than Tennyson. He feels that they are dealing with a profoundly reserved man and are getting only the life before the curtain. They can discuss the universe with him, find him "the glorious Robert" because of his agreeable manners, stores of ideas, continental rather than English vivacity and pains to please, but as time goes on no barriers fall down admitting them, more fully than the world at large, to the inner personality they would like to have access to. His disinclination to found a school he utters under dramatic cloak in At the Mermaid.

Whatever influence we shall make good as exerted by him upon the Pre-Raphaelite group, is not of his seeking. He is really one of the most lonely and inaccessible of all English literary personalities; in so far a striking contrast to the keenest of his admirers.

Rossetti is a propagandist, a born school-founder: draws men of distinct individuality, for a time, quite under his sway: finds he must have an organ for his ideas and gets them to run him one: then when the first group disperses finds another receptive of his domination: deflects them from their intended careers, setting a rugged personality like Morris painting pictures, for the time being, against his true bent. Rossetti is a domineering nature who applies driving force to such ideas as fall in with his own powerful idiosyncrasy. Browning, despite a bearing of great charm and courtesy, is a strongly self-centred personality, who throws out ideas in abundance, each enough to form a school, but having done so leaves them without assistance to find their way in the world.

Enough has been instanced to show conclusively that Browning loomed larger in the eyes of the Pre-Raphaelites than did any other thinker or poet of his time. Both groups of Pre-Raphaelites, the earlier London

one, which ran The Germ, and the later Oxford one, which ran The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine, are passionate champions of him and hold him almost for a part of their creed. D. G. Rossetti's preference for him over Tennyson is expressed as late as 1871. Morris later in life holds by Tennyson, but in his review of Men and Women wavers in his judgment, and in a letter of 1856 holds Browning for the greatest poet alive. The settlement of allegiance was a long process with him. And though Tennyson's consistent artistry, helped by Morris's revulsion from his great rival's "abruptness, obscurity, theology, constant dwelling on sin and probing of the secrets of hearts", finally procures him the vote, yet the issue hangs long in doubt, and threatens at the outset to be other than it proved.

The explanation lies in the fact that the Pre-Raphaelite movement began as a revolt in Painting. The impulse originated by Hogarth, which had produced the great portraitists and landscape-painters betwen 1723 the birth of Reynolds, and 1823 the death of Raeburn, was dying out. In 1848, the year when the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was formed, it was nearing extinction. In portrait and landscape the English artists had been great as a school. In classical and historical subject-painting they had failed to establish a really generative set of traditions: they had been great sporadically, in spontaneous exceptions like Blake and Turner. Small pictures of genre they had made in abundance, but no imaginative treatment of humble life at all corresponding to Wordsworth's of the peasant, in poetry. And now with the exhaustion of the first great impulse English painting had felt, save for the aged Turner, academical subject-painting and genre, without distinguished portrait or landscape, held the field. Content in past achievement showed in conventions of composition and colouring, and in refinement upon worn-out methods: want of faith in

the mission of painting appeared in triviality, unreality and sentimentality of theme.

Etty, Eastlake, Haydon and Landseer are the masters of the decaying classical school. It is to Haydon that Wordsworth's references to painting are devoted; such, for instance, as that sonnet on the picture of Napoleon at St. Helena, beginning,

> Haydon! let worthier judges praise the skill
> Here by thy pencil shown in truth of lines
> And charm of colours,

the opening lines already revealing a gulf between its author and Browning.

For Wordsworth, like all previous English poets but Blake, is exclusively a poet; knows little of painting; disclaims technical acquaintance with it; is like Scott and Byron rather than the generation of poets heralded by Browning. "Conversation" Sharp cannot induce Scott to walk the length of a gallery in the Louvre to look at master-pieces. Byron in Childe Harold seizes only the most obvious characteristics of the works of art he sees in Italy.

Browning, on the other hand, impresses Rossetti at the Louvre by a knowledge of Italian painting, in range and extent if not in penetration, beyond that of Ruskin. He hovers among the arts undecided whether to take as his medium poetry or painting or music. He is the first striking example of a new race of poets marked by interest and accomplishment in several branches of art. Rossetti and Morris are indeed hard to class, whether as poet painter-and-decorators, or as painter-and-decorator poets. Still further, they insist on organic connection among the arts. It is not enough for them that a picture should be true to nature and expressive of something worthy — poetical, that is, in subject. It must have relation to architecture: it should also be ornamental; it ought to be possible for it to be part of a beautiful whole

in a room or church or hall. The pictures of Rossetti have always a decorative quality. He of all the original group of Pre-Raphaelites had most sense of the historical connection of the arts. "His mind was formed", says Morris, "on that looking into history which is such a marked feature of the general revolt against academicism: and whoever looks into history will find living art there always decorative". The Pre-Raphaelite school is remarkable then for the connection upon which it insists, among the arts: which being the case, one ground of Browning's attraction for them is clear. He opens by his many-sided outlook the era in British art that they represent.

Browning's living interest in arts sister to his own comes out in Pippa Passes. The second episode in that poem deals, under cover of a sculptor's career, with the subject of Revival in the Plastic Arts. Jules and Phene is a Pre-Raphaelite parable, recognising decline, and prescribing the way in which the new painter will arise.

Jules executes the customary themes in marble with more than usual expertness. His studio already holds Psyche, Hippolyta, Tydeus, The Greek Singer Praising those who Slew Hipparchus, and other pleasing classical fancies. With him each substance tends to one form of beauty, the human archetype: the classical Ettyan ideal is his, of portraying "Great Actions and the Human Form". The technical processes of his art awaken a fervour in him at their very recall. He is enthusiastic about the various stuffs one can be master of; expounds lovingly the distinct expressive powers of chalk and steel and marble.

He passes in the episode in question through two swift mental changes: through a growth of dissatisfaction with himself that is purely artistic and superficial, to the quickly supervening birth within him, through pity, of a soul. It is after this profounder transformation that all that he had done before revolts him and he flings all on

the heap together to make an entirely fresh start. He finds himself now with things to express; no longer expressions to find things for; things that will of themselves out. He feels too the power to utter them — implied, as it were, in the change.

> One may do whate'er one likes
> In Art: the only thing is, to make sure
> That one does like it — which takes pains to know.

The poetry within a man will create its own technical processes.

We learn from his letter to the Bishop, his patron, how he regards the change within him: "He never had a clearly conceived Ideal within his brain till today. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel he has practised expressing other men's Ideals; and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure". There is one chance for him to escape the conventions of previous artists; viz., to change his medium, turn painter, instead of sculptor, and paint not carve, his new Ideal. And the Bishop, though annoyed at this check in his plans for his protégé, allows that the youth is probably right: "if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way, by a poet now, or a musician (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel), transferring it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them?"

The correspondence between this and the revival, about 1850, in English painting, is not hard to draw: Etty and the decaying classical school answer to Jules in his first state. Maclise, who after visiting Paris in 1844 finds London painters the most wretched set of snivellers that ever took pencil in hand, corresponds to his second stage — of merely artistic discontent. Mulready, Leslie, Creswick, Egg, Herbert, Dyce — Ruskin adds William Hunt, Samuel Prout, John Lewis and Edwin Landseer — are other men of sterling merit who emancipate themselves in some degree from conventions, thereby anticipating the naturalistic side

of the movement. Mulready, Lewis, Dyce, are more than half Pre-Raphaelites. Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites proper answer to him in his final stage, when he turns to a new medium, to get untrammeled expression of the human ideals that are welling up within him. He and they are "originals", in the Youngian sense, who contrive to produce something entirely new in art, by discovering a medium in which their ideas have not been expressed before.

"If any man has poetry in him," preaches Rossetti to his disciples, "he should paint, for it has all been said and written and they have scarcely begun to paint it." With keen insight Rossetti detects the presence of the necessary poetry in the tyro Burne-Jones and makes a master-painter of him; and by his constraining personal force he deflects William Morris for a time into the same service of painting poetry. Rossetti is a propagandist Jules, proclaiming Poetry through Paint as the crying need of the day. He applies driving force to the idea. But the anticipation that the new painter to arise would be a translated poet, the Pre-Raphaelite notion of renewing painting, not by fresh technical advances but by an infusion of poetry, is found here in Browning's most popular poem quite fifteen years before Rossetti begins to preach.

Browning's whole early work is signalised by that which specially mark the Pre-Raphaelite, the exalting of Life, Human Feeling, Love of Men, Poetry, Subject, in the artist, above mere formal accomplishment. Tennyson has the thought in The Palace of Art, but presents it with less concreteness than Browning, through a somewhat remote vision. Browning is possessed by the idea. The subject of his great thirteenth century study Sordello is that of the love of men, pity for the populace, entering after "strange miseries, battles, and despairs" and transforming a hitherto merely intellectual imagination.

That Rossetti borrowed the idea of painting poetry from Pippa Passes, is not maintained. The thing lay

inherent in the curious balance of Rossetti's powers. It is rather a case of many-sidedness, common to him and Browning, and which Browning is the first of modern English poets strikingly to manifest, originating like artistic doctrine in each.

Rossetti's highly praised sonnets upon well-known pictures are hardly finer than Browning's description of Caravaggio's Andromeda in Pauline, his first published poem.

Andromeda!
And she is with me: years roll, I shall change,
But change can touch her not — so beautiful
With her fixed eyes, earnest and still, and hair
Lifted and spread by the salt-sweeping breeze,
And one red beam, all the storm leaves in heaven,
Resting upon her eyes and hair, such hair,
As she awaits the snake on the wet beach
By the dark rock and the white wave just breaking
At her feet; quite naked and alone; a thing
I doubt not, nor fear for, secure some god
To save will come in thunder from the stars.

The pictorial elements, colour touches included, are here all appreciated. But Browning has the power, widely lost today through too exclusive reliance upon words, of taking imaginative impression direct from picture. Eyes more than ears are the channel by which creative impression reaches him. The painting Andromeda is to him the symbol of a boldly-implicative idea — of the whole unseen world's being bound to interpose and save so incomparable a being.

This openness to impression through picture is shared and advocated by the Pre-Raphaelites. If Rossetti has a gospel for painters of Poetry through Paint, Morris has one for the public, Of the Use of our Eyes as Interpreters to our Brains. In talk, in lecture, in giving evidence before commissioners, he deplores, again and again, the lost use of our eyes.

As with Andromeda so with Guercino's Guardian Angel. Browning takes from the canvas an imaginative

thought that is there and unravels it into unlooked-for personal implications, incidentally using a Pre-Raphaelite watch-word.

and since I care
For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent) —
And since he did not work thus earnestly
At all times, and has else endured some wrong —
I took one thought his picture struck from me,
And spread it out, translating it to song.

Old Italian earnestness, the faith of the early men in their mission as painters, and not principally their technique, attracts the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

Browning's view of pictorial art chimes with that of the Pre-Raphaelites very circumstantially in Old Pictures in Florence, a semi-sportive exercise upon the works of early Italian masters he has acquired. The poem is ripe interpretation of old Pre-Raphaelite purpose, written with fuller knowledge of art in Italy than the seven revolters, Rossetti not excepted, had, and with emphasis rightly placed, less on revolt from any predecessors than on a positive purpose of expression in those old painters. Revolters they were, to be sure, in Italy as in England, from a classicism in vogue. Greek teachers offered them for model, man's face with "no more play and action than joy which is crystallized for ever, or grief, an eternal petrifaction." But the innovators prefer,

To become now self-acquainters,
And paint man man, whatever the issue!
Make new hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
New fears aggrandize the rags and tatters:
To bring the invisible full into play!

Browning praises the men for attempting so much before they could do it well, records that his private taste has always been Pre-Raphaelite,

But at any rate I have loved the season
Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy;
My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan,

My painter — who but Cimabue?
Nor ever was man of them all indeed,
From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,
Could say that he missed my critic meed,

and proceeds to characterise the various old painters whose works he has examples of.

After this confession of allegiance, and the appreciative study of old Pre-Raphaelite work which this and other poems bear witness to, Browning would be entitled, were he ambitious to limit himself so much, equally with those who actually took it, to the name of Pre-Raphaelite; for the accepting of it on the part of the revolters was more of a freak — the sportive adoption of a nick-name from opponents — than a deliberate discipleship to Raphael's fore-runners. The young painters' knowledge of early art is in some cases a little thin. Stephens's Purpose and Tendency of Early Italian Art in The Germ is not signalised by great wealth of knowledge of early Italy. Well-known reference books - Ottley, Rossini, D'Agincourt — together with fac-simile reprints and Ghiberti casts in Somerset House, account for most of it. It is a case of art-impulse driving a man to look up history, rather than art-history begetting impulse. The Pre-Raphaelites do not even copy a style from the early painters. Stephens disavows, in the article referred to, the adoption of technique from the Italians: "These principles are now revived not from them" (the Italian Pre-Raphaelites) "though through their example, but from Nature herself". Ruskin writes of the school: "The Pre-Raphaelite pictures are just as superior to the early Italian in skill of manipulation, power of drawing, and knowledge of effect, as inferior to them in grace of drawing; there is not a shadow of resemblance between the two styles. The Pre-Raphaelites imitate no pictures, they paint from Nature only".

Browning's erudition and sympathy with early art make him as happy a theoriser about their own school as is any of the brotherhood. What the youths recognised

in early work as congenial to their own tendencies, is expressed even more aptly by him than in any statement of aims drawn up by themselves. His general characterisation of the old Florentines puts their function in art in memorable phrasing, which applies at once to them, to the English Pre-Raphaelites, and to Browning himself, as regards part at least of his productivity. The Etruscan Italians did mix the natural world with the supernatural — so much so that "when their supernatural world had gone they lost everything that made art worthy of high aim". And Rossetti's function in pictorial art is distinctly that of bringing the invisible full into play, making new hopes shine through the flesh they fray, new fears aggrandise the rags and tatters. His outstanding characteristic is the vitality of his belief in the power of the unseen. Theodore Watts characterises him as turning by inevitable instinct to that mysterious side of nature and man's life which to the other painters of the time had been a mere fairy-land, to be visited, if at all, on the wings of sport. And in the early masters' determination, according to Browning, to paint man man, whatever the issue, the naturalistic side of both Pre-Raphaelitisms comes to expression.

Browning's knowledge of early Italy shown in Old Pictures and in Sordello is deserving of emphasis. For one thing, it makes him a striking pioneer of the tendency now-a-days to pursue the anterior boundaries of the Renaissance back to the middle of the thirteenth century. The pleasantries of critics about the compression of Browning's style in Sordello distracted their gaze from that in the work which the Pre-Raphaelites detected — its significance as a guide to a new, in 1840 little appreciated, yet enthrallingly interesting period of culture, the turbulent thirteenth century in Italy[1].

[1] The Silesian Eichendorff had portrayed the son of Browning's Ecelin dramatically in 1828, on the basis of a mediæval Latin play, and with nothing like the authentic setting of Browning's Sordello.

The Pre-Raphaelites hailed gladly this portrayal of a buoyant period of growth in life and art, in preference to those studies of culmination and decline which were to be had of the professors of painting at the Royal Academy. They welcomed the rescue in Sordello of a literary precursor of Dante and marked the poem's illuminating asides concerning the painter forerunners of Cimabue.

Sordello is born —

> With the new century, beside the glow
> And efflorescence out of barbarism;
> Witness a Greek or two from the abysm
> That stray through Florence-town with studious air
> Calming the chisel of that Pisan pair:
> If Nicolo should carve a Christus yet!
> While at Siena is Guidone set,
> Forehead on hand; a painful birth must be
> Matured ere St. Eufemia's sacristy
> Or transept gather fruit of one great gaze
> At the moon: look you! the same orange haze, —
> The same blue stripe round that — and, in the midst,
> Thy spectral whiteness, Mother-maid, who didst
> Pursue the dizzy painter!

For another thing, Sordello exhibits in marked degree an element Browning contributed to Romance — viz., intellectual intensity. The quality shows itself partly in much stricter authenticity of historical setting; partly, as we shall see, in infused Intention, in Purpose.

Romance, as he treats it, has in the first place so much implicit history. Browning ushers in a school of new romanticists, in spirit much nearer to Carlyle than to Scott; marked by a more deliberate research, inclined to regard apparent trifles in history as important documents of the human spirit, and to handle them for that reason reverently. Scott is essentially a great writer of comedy; lives more by his comic creations, his Balderstones and Dinmonts, than by his mediæval accessories. "It was not by his antiquities that Scott established his lasting fame." Browning's field is less comedy than tragedy. Colombe's Birthday has a joyous ending, but the joy is very grave and earnest:

Pippa's happiness is touched with pathos from its very briefness: Bluphocks only covers the shame of his nakedness with the rags of devil-may-care good spirits: Ogniben's brightness is a genial cynicism (Thus Dowden upon Browning's preoccupation with tragedy). Browning introduces an earnest new temper into Romance, and this earnest quality involves faithful and full historical setting as a corollary.

The history in Browning's, Morris's, Rossetti's, Madox Brown's, Swinburne's pieces, is as integrally part of them as is fitness to the historical character essential in an Imaginary Conversation by Landor. Irving stages King Lear from Madox Brown's picture Cordelia's Portion — uses it literally as an historical document. Ruskin makes a similar use of Browning's The Bishop Orders his Tomb. The Glove by Browning is as true to Ronsard's time as Landor's Pericles dialogue to heroic Athens. "Men are the merest Ixions", the truncated speech with which Ronsard for once wearies his royal hearer, enshrines humorously that fashion of fine speaking at court in the day of King Francis when men were really at pains to give new dignity to French by learned allusion.

Browning adds Research to Romance; he adds, as we have indicated, something also of Purpose, Drift, Tendency. Just as Carlyle uses history to point a political theory of How Personality Acts in the World, Browning uses his authentic studies with almost religious aim to throw light upon the Ways of Souls — aims both beyond the ken of Scott.

Browning's psychological Sordello probably called forth Hand and Soul, Rossetti's prose poem with a purpose, in the same environment. Rossetti in just the years of this soul-portrait's origin half worshipped Sordello; so that it is not inherently unlikely he should try his hand in a slightly different medium in emulation of Browning. His hero "faint in sunsets and at the sight of stately persons" lives in rivalry with the same

Greek masters, in the same turbulent time as Guidone, the dizzy painter of St. Eufemia's sacristy. Browning seems the only English fore-runner of Rossetti in the choice of an artist's spiritual history for subject, as in that of the early thirteenth century in Italy to treat it in.

In Andromeda and in the above extract from Sordello we have one more thing connected with the Plastic Arts that would be of attraction to the Pre-Raphaelites — Browning's revel in pure colour. It would be easy to match his reds, black, dark-greens, olives, azures, crimsons, colour for colour, out of Morris's poetry, as well as from the vivid unsubdued colour-pattern of many Pre-Raphaelite pictures: out of Rossetti less readily; he works more in colour keys. But this lively interest in the startling, unaltered hues of things is only one element in the seizing and reproducing of all appearance whatever.

Faithful reproduction of the actual without selection or omission is an early convention of the Pre-Raphaelite school. They have a one model rule by which combination of features from more than one sitter is discountenanced: having found the model answering most nearly to his conception, the Pre-Raphaelite is to paint him faithfully. Browning too draws with his eye upon the object. His landscapes in Pauline and Sordello, and in the lyrical poems, are recollections of what he has seen and noted. Even the imaginative landscape of Childe Roland is a memory, not an invention. His landscape does not grow under his pen from edition to edition: he even makes a point of not altering what has once been set up in print. Stopford Brooke terms the landscapes of his first published work almost Pre-Raphaelite in their detail.

What is Pre-Raphaelitism?

It is in its origin — that is to say, before it meant standing more or less under the influence of Rossetti or Burne-Jones — an ethical mode of seeing. It is conscientious seeing: seeing humbly — with reverence for the object Pre-Raphaelitism was first of all a thorough-going

reaction in painting — in which both hand and soul had part — against the careless, slap-dash, sketching-in of objects, by artists to whom all but some obvious, stage-heroic, stage-pathetic, or trivial central object was insignificant, and therefore scamped. It opposed itself to all slurring-over; would have no "corners", as they are termed, in pictures; no dead spots, no despised places. Pre-Raphaelite pictures must be all alive, tingling with interest in every part of them. Pre-Raphaelitism gave loving attention to facts hitherto slighted by artists. "The truths of form in common ground", says Ruskin, "are quite as valuable — quite as beautiful — as any others which nature presents. A really great artist dwells on every inch of exposed soil with care and delight, and renders it one of the most essential, speaking and pleasurable parts of his composition".

Accordingly all things brought at all into a Pre-Raphaelite picture are rendered faithfully: if taken into the range of sight are visualised separately, giving the comparatively definite outline characteristic of Pre-Raphaelite works — without definiteness being a shibboleth. In spurious Pre-Raphaelite work does it become such.

An essential feature of the method is its objectivity; its reliance upon things, only reproduce their shapes, their colours, lights and shades faithfully, to yield valuable meanings unfailingly. Instead of taking an idea, petty or grand as may be, and embodying that and little else by means of a necessary minimum of outer forms, the Pre-Raphaelites take a vital subject, steep themselves in all down to the minutest visual facts it involves, and render it, together with all incidental truths the forms yield up. Their pictures have that abundance of meaning that Ruskin demands when he names that the greatest picture which presents the greatest number of the greatest truths, and when he calls a picture unfinished, that is capable of taking one more truth without prejudice to its unity.

Phenomenally keen sight is usually associated with the method — as if the sheer seeing-power applied by Wordsworth to outdoor nature received a more extended application to a world of men and women. For, like Wordsworth, the users of the method aim to suppress "the meddling intellect" and let facts as they appear tell their own tale. The impartial revelations of the eye of the camera had no little to do with Pre-Raphaelite vision.

Power of sight and wonder at the seen are the two things that drive Browning's obviously congenial hero Fra Lippo Lippi to paint, according to the poem of that name.

> However, you're my man, you've seen the world
> — The beauty and the wonder and the power,
> The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
> Changes, surprises, — and God made it all!
> — For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
> For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
> The mountain round it and the sky above,
> Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
> These are a frame to? What's it all about?
> To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
> Wondered at? oh, this last of course! — you say.
> But why not do as well as say, — paint these
> Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
> God's works — paint anyone, and count it crime
> To let a truth slip.

The same reverence and sense of wonder is at the root of Browning's own realism in poetry. No detached, half-scientific or merely æsthetic impulse leads him to unexalted and proscribed persons. "Power" underlies the factory-girl's life, just as truly as lives in higher station. "Power" lends on that day in Asolo more influence upon the fates of others to Pippa's spontaneous New-Year's gladness, than have the calculated doings of any of her "great" fellow townspeople. To those who would rule out the lives of any from artistic treatment as being insignificant, Browning protests,

> Say not "a small event"! Why "small"?
> Costs it more pain that this, ye call

A "great event", should come to pass,
Than that? Untwine me from the mass
Of deeds which make up life, one deed
Power shall fall short in or exceed!

It is the optimistic conviction of the intense meaning that underlies all things, the thought that there are no gaps in the world where significance is wanting, no streaks of life deficiently informed with "Power", that inspires the labour lavished on every detail in Browning's work and in that of the first English Pre-Raphaelites.

It is not search for richness, incidental product as that is of their endeavour. Pre-Raphaelite pictures have truly the decorative richness, derived from the full occupation of their surface, of old Flemish tapestries. But richness is no end and aim in their case, — or only a secondary one, subsidiary to the genuineness of imagination striven for in that everything in the pictures must be genuinely felt, all ideas there freshly minted, no thought there blunted by usage so as to have lost its pristine force. Their authors are, for comparison, more earnestly-, more ethically-minded than Keats, greatly as they admire his deliberate imaginative filling of his lines, his loading, according to his own expressive phrase, of every rift of a subject with ore. Their main purpose is the different, more ethical one of Browning and Ruskin, or lastly of Carlyle, who counsels the Poet first of all to love the thing to be portrayed, to sympathise with it, in other words to be virtuously related to it, and thereby get such clear intense sight of the thing, that the word will follow of itself that will describe the thing.

So much description of the method and of the temper which prompts it. What of the quality of the method as such? Does not such even attention to detail throughout a picture involve loss of Relation — the exalting, so to speak, of Ruskin's "inch of common ground" to equal value with the human face? At times,

especially in painting. Lewis's rich and delicate painting The Harem fails of adequate effect through the too great evenness of its interest — through want of a keynote, that is. Masters like Rossetti and Holman Hunt fail on occasion to strike their keynote at once, and leave the beholder to work up to it from the details with a labour which makes the picture a homily. Rossetti's critic in The Quarterly Review for 1896 remarks the fact. Even in poetry such loss of relation is to be detected — e. g., in Browning's The Englishman in Italy:

> Red ripe as could be,
> Pomegranates were chapping and splitting
> In halves on the tree:
> And betwixt the loose walls of great flint-stone,
> Or in the thick dust
> On the path, or straight out of the rock-side,
> Wherever could thrust
> Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock-flower
> Its yellow face up,
> For the prize were great butterflies fighting,
> Some five for one cup.

Here instead of seizing a single comprehensive impression of a scene, the poet seems to be hunted and harassed by objects which all register themselves on an abnormal retina with an over-distinctness and unnaturally equal emphasis that is almost distressful. In Pauline and Sordello too, many a picture is surcharged with observation; some remarkably-shaped plant, some queer woolly leaf sticking out of some oddly-placed crevice, will not be denied, but will intrude upon some already complete description.

But the method is not for this anathema. To work from the details to the idea is a legitimate variation of the more usual procedure of starting with idea and enriching and deepening by the study of detail. It is the portraiture of Heroes and Hero-Worship as opposed to that of Representative Men. Nay, the method is

the right and advantageous one for the treatment of some themes, and in Browning and in the Pre-Raphaelites scores peculiar and signal successes. Its very fitness (prescribed as it perhaps was by alien considerations) to the more intense themes which were in the air, makes the greatness of the Pre-Raphaelite school, and enables them to create a fresh artistic symbol.

One happy and justifiable application is the device affected by them all, and treated expressly in Rossetti's The Woodspurge. Addiction to it, along with a naïve religiousness, is singled out by Professor Raleigh as a leading mark of the Pre-Raphaelite. It rests upon the psychological fact that in extreme joy, grief, rage, fear, expectancy — in perfect emotion of any but the most shattering and annihilating sort, the senses seem prone to register, even to the point of distortion, minute details of occurrence or surrounding.

Does not Harry Richmond, after the tense excitement of his rencounter with his lost father under the extraordinary disguise of a statue on horseback, relate the affair always in exactly the same words and succession of incident, so indelibly, with such distorted prominence, are certain things stamped upon his startled brain through the augmented emotion of the situation, while his friend's saner version varies with every new telling? And does not Meredith deliberately turn to account just the over-defined staring detail of Richmond's story, to translate the reader the better into the tense state of mind which noted it? The use of the psychology of intensity is a natural proceeding on the part of authors who, with Browning, take minute and accurate observation of outer appearance as their basis. It occurs in Tennyson in isolation. Raleigh recalls the blue fly buzzing in the pane. But of Browning and of the Pre-Raphaelites after him, it is characteristic.

Ruskin remarks of the details of Hunt's The Awakened Conscience, "Nothing is more notable than the way

in which even the most trivial objects force themselves upon the attention of a mind which has been fevered by violent and distressful excitement. They thrust themselves forward with a ghastly and unendurable distinctness, as if they would compel the sufferer to count or measure or learn them by heart." The Catalogue of the Whitechapel Picture Exhibition, 1905, remarks strikingly of seemingly trivial details in other Pre-Raphaelite pictures, "The carefully - wrought shavings of the carpenter's shop, the awkward gesture of Claudio fingering his fetters, contrasted with the intense emotion of Christ's face or Claudio's expression, startle the onlooker and reveal to him a gulf of emotional atmosphere, as a pebble falling into an abyss of the mountains reveals to our consciousness the vast gulf of space."

Instances of the same thing in Browning and the Pre-Raphaelite poets are easily tabulated:

Give up that noon I owned my love for you?
The garden's silence: even the single bee
Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopped,
And where he hid you only could surmise
By some campanula chalice set aswing.

Pippa Passes.

The spies came once and looked;
And while they stopped, and made all sights and sounds
Sharp to my startled senses, I remember
A woman laughed above me.

A Last Confession.

Did I not watch him while he let
His armourer just brace his greaves,
Rivet his hauberk, on the fret
The while! His foot . . . . . my memory leaves
No least stamp out, nor how anon
He pulled his ringing gauntlets on.

Count Gismond.

Her neck unbent not, neither did her eyes
Move, nor her foot left beating of the sand;

A Last Confession.

And, while for rage his thumb beat fast
Upon his sword-hilt, some one cast

About his neck a kerchief long,
And bound him.

The Haystack in the Floods

And scarce I felt
His sword (that dripped by me and swung)
A little shifted in its belt:
For he began to say the while
How South our home lay many a mile.

Count Gismond.

I felt you
Taper into a point the ruffled end
Of my loose locks 'twixt both your humid lips.

Pippa Passes.

Our mother rose from where she sat:
Her needles, as she laid them down,
Met lightly, and her silken gown
Settled: no other noise than that.

My Sister's Sleep.

These are all of those cases where, under perfect emotion, single things are felt with phenomenal sharpness, where the course of nature seems to halt while one observes, perhaps a bee's settling, or the pattern of a book-cover, or the dripping of water out of doors.

With Rossetti, whose life was prone to exaggerated feeling, the state of mind favourable to these impressions is more recurrent, more an every-day fact of experience, than with his fellows, and he uses the device which it suggests for literary ends with greater deliberateness. He imparts Style to the device. My Sister's Sleep seems a succession of such intense moments; A Last Confession the same. Everything in these poems is so distinct as to seem to have its place like the separate operations of a ritual, in which every motion is fraught with significance. Intensity in Poetry is by Rossetti accorded Style: the feeling evoked in the reader by the staring distinctness of the details he heightens still further by repetitions of telling —

Father, you cannot know of all my thoughts
That day in going to meet her, — that last day
For the last time, she said; — of all the love
And all the hopeless hope that she might change
And go back with me.

At Iglio in the first thin shade o' the hills
The sand is black and red.

Then again I knew
All, as we stood together on the sand
At Iglio, in the first thin shade o' the hills.

All round her side it is wet through,
But, like the sand at Iglio, does not change.

The same deliberate skill, a ritual-like skill of variation upon a theme, is expended to lead up to the laugh, the critical laugh, which decides the fate of the girl.

The registering in the lurid way we have noted of minute outer circumstances has another function in connection with thrilling incidents of soul, besides the awakening of sympathetic intensity in the reader. The recorded detail confers port, permanence, existence, upon what would otherwise prove fugitive and vanish. The associated detail is indispensable if the event is to be in any way retained. Without these points to seize it by, the whole experience, like Pompilia's, would dwindle fast to sheer impossibility and dreaming.

"Are time and place matters of indifference to anyone, especially in those situations in which the whole soul is stirred or fashioned or transformed? In youth, in scenes of passion, in all dealings in which life itself is at stake! It is just Place and Time and Fullness of outer circumstances which are needed to lend fixed form, lasting quality, sense of reality, to the whole concern".

An enforcement of these words of Herder we find in Browning's By the Fireside, a poem in which the poet's own love-making is recapitulated in scene and circumstance with refelt emotion. It is just a case of Place and Time and Fullness of outer circumstances lending location,

permanence, sense of reality, to a psychic transformation. The lichens and chestnut-balls on the path on that critical walk, in distinctness matching the veined ivy tendrils, the crimped hair of the queen, the smoke from the incense-burner and other perfectly defined particulars of Rossetti's Proserpine, confer, so to say, a local habitation and a name upon an impalpable event of soul.

> On our other side is the straight-up rock;
> And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
> By boulder-stones where lichens mock
> The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
> Their teeth to the polished block.
>
> Oh the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,
> And thorny-balls, each three in one,
> The chestnuts throw on our path in showers!

Sebald and Ottima again, the first of the episodes in Pippa Passes, is a triumphant case of minute outer delineation lending pose, permanence, existence, to a shifting play of resolves and revulsions within two strangely situated souls. In this swift double tragedy of a New Year's morning, all before and around the thrilling event is pictorially given with phenomenal distinctness and wealth of detail. One seems more than told, one seems to behold, the year of intercourse between the German music-master and the young wife of the old factory-owner, which has resulted in the old man's murder and will culminate in the suicide of the culprit pair.

One knows the geography of the place, for in the clear morning air Ottima

> can see St. Mark's;
> That black streak is the belfry. Stop: Vicenza
> Should lie . . . there's Padua, plain enough, that blue!

One can visualise the great stone house with its rough white wooden shutters, rusty iron bars, silent as death; for one hears how it used to affect Sebald before the intercourse, as he approached it of mornings. You see the party within the house the New Year's day the

year before. They examine foreign prints over their wine and fruit. Ottima has to scheme to get the old man from the fire. Nothing but saying his own set wants the proof-mark rouses him up to hunt them out. You see the first guilty meeting in the woods, with the appalling thunderstorm, where God's messenger, the lightning, plunges and replunges his weapon at a venture, feeling for the guilty pair. In the shrub-house where they stand one sees the dusty pane that serves for looking-glass: Ottima's three, four — four grey hairs: the plant bruised by Sebald in getting through the lattice yester-eve: his elbow-mark in the dust of the sill: the passers-by — in particular Old Benet, the Capuchin, of whom at his regular place in church we have a perfect vignette. It is all detail that has been faithfully observed — in the manner of the Pre-Raphaelites later — and its inclusion is defensible — as some of Tennyson's, in Enoch Arden for instance, is not — because all seen or recalled by Sebald and Ottima in mental tension after the murder, and so related to an emotional state.

The Bishop Orders his Tomb, again, as Ruskin's singling out for commendation suggests, is at least as signal a case as the others of anticipation of Pre-Raphaelite method. It appeared like Pippa Passes well before the Pre-Raphaelites revolted. It is an extraordinary example of this perpetuating power which vivid detail has, in connection with intense emotion. All that the agitated mind of the bishop sees or recalls so vividly in the deathbed monologue, makes us, as often as we read it, participators in the intense exultations, hopes and apprehensions in which his mind for a season flickers up. Directness is the quality of every sentence of the dramatic soliloquy. So direct is the speaking that it has no connecting words, subordinating conjunctions, unsensuous particles such as might pale intensity by bringing in abstraction. It leaves a medley of the straightest and most vivid impressions,

and a sense of high-wrought emotion corresponding. The poet has chosen an intense instant for portrayal, saturated himself with authentic details of time and place, and then poured his acquisitions out without apparent plan and order. And by so proceeding creates in us incidentally — Ruskin's one extra truth, as it were — a just idea of a highly distinctive age of Italian culture. It is the very reliance upon fact that Ruskin finds and extols in the Pre-Raphaelites. Strange only that he should not have recognised it here himself, but should have needed Rossetti to point it out to him.

These three excerpts from Browning are all then distinct anticipations of Pre-Raphaelite treatment. Earlier Pre-Raphaelite pictures — the works wrought under the original London impulse — are all, in very fact, what these pieces from Browning are — perpetuations of psychic crises. Hardly one of the hundreds in the recent Whitechapel show of 1905 but portrays a soul for some reason deeply stirred, or undergoing transformation, or acting with life and death in the balance. And the technical procedure in one and all is from authenticity of outer detail to truth of inner idea.

The Ring and the Book is an application of the method on a grander scale than any Pre-Raphaelite work affords. This huge poem is built of a countless multitude of the minutest touches and, thanks to the authentic character of them all, gives a clear picture of Roman society in the eighteenth century, from pope to beggar, as a mere incident to the portrayal of a group of much exercised souls, As a mere incident, I say: the touches never sink into mere archæology. Browning is thus still complying with the demands of Ruskin, at a time when Rossetti and Burne-Jones are treating souls with a technique definite, to be sure, but much more generalising and subjective than that of the original revolt.

Browning is before and after the Pre-Raphaelites in the use of their distinctive method. The method is in

fact his. The chief difference between them and him is that in his case minute delineation is more a thing of nature, in theirs has something of prescription. He lays down his groundwork of observation with a rage and passion of seeing, and a profuseness and prodigality of things noted, that not one of them can equal. It would be possible to exhibit the much more complicated background of The Ring and the Book with the same clearness and visuality as we have used with Sebald and Ottima from Pippa Passes.

The method, I repeat, is Browning's. To characterise it in brief: It is a visual method, in literature closely associated with painting. It is faithfully realistic, with a realism inspired, not by half scientific or merely æsthetic interest in the appearances of things, but by Interest in Men, by Humility and Reverence. Richness is not, as in the work of Keats, its aim, though often its result. Its Humility marks it off from the equally minute delineation sometimes used, without great concern for the inner meaning of what is seen, to give pose and permanence to a mood of an author's — e. g., Pierre Loti's in his Japanese romances. Browning's interest is always in the souls involved in his story, himself and his moods remaining quite out of the bill. His concern is in decisive events in the history of these souls. His eye is for the high-wrought moments in which these events take place. His art may accordingly be summed up as a method of exhibiting intense situations of soul through a presentation of their outer circumstances in all possible fulness and authenticity.

After all that has been said of crises of soul and mental transformations we are prepared to hear that Browningite and Pre-Raphaelite situations, in keeping with this emotional content, incline to the extraordinary. The artists have indeed a predilection for those involving striking contrast, trenchant irony, things unexpected, or such as give a shock to the very sensitive. We have men from

the East — Luria, Husain, Djabal — in contact with the West, the advocate of Cleves forcing his way before Queen Colombe, sovereigns abdicating, the poet in Jenny's chamber, Launcelot in Guenevere's, Pippa among the harlots, situations of unique pathos as in The Last of England or in The Scapegoat. And we are prepared to hear — what has been charged against Browning — that the characters chosen for treatment are exceptional, not infrequently repulsive or violent. It is the exceptional person who experiences psychic crises.

A list of characters could be drawn up out of Browning's dramas to point the charge — a list of persons either too passionate or too purely intellectual or too ruthless or too young or too repugnant. Leonard Courtney draws one up and brands the art it presents as inartistic realism. The judgment may be just, though some may think it the protest of the idyllically-minded against a warmer-blooded, more dramatic type of character than he has been accustomed to. The interesting thing for us is that, in the course of branding Browning's art, its censor recognises its relation to the Pre - Raphaelite. "Life is not all meanness or vice, any more than a cornfield is all Pre-Raphaelite poppies, or a human face all photographic moles and wrinkles. A dramatic writer who lays emphatic stress on the morbid phases of life is guilty of this kind of inartistic realism".

Obsession by his interest in soul affects Browning's attitude to external nature, and involves a further affinity to the Pre-Raphaelites. The communications he and they detect between human beings and the external world are bound up closely with those summits of emotion for which we have marked their preference. In Browning's By the Fireside, for example, it is contemporaneously with one of those psychic crises, and transformations, that Nature abandons for a moment her immemorial aloofness. Perfect emotion has put the two beings of the poem in the right state of mind momentarily for

Nature to perform a work upon them. In Rossetti's A Last Confession again, it is at a time of crisis, at a period of supreme mental agitation — in the hush when all trembles in the balance, and the girl stands before the choice which is crucial for herself and quondam protector — that the sea strives hard to give assistance. The moved lover, though not the girl, in his almost ecstatic perfection of love anguish, is accessible to the influences of Nature, and the sea would help him if it could.

> And standing silent now at last, I looked
> Into her scornful face; and heard the sea
> Still trying hard to din into my ears
> Some speech it knew which still might change her heart.

For the rest external nature is indifferent: remains a separate, anterior creation of God, with no care or understanding for man or communication with him. Rossetti terms Nature "listless". Browning portrays her as oblivious, immediately her beneficent moment is past, of the benefited humans. Both authors ascribe to her an existence anterior to that of the human race, — an ancient life or else an ancient mood into which she relapses.

Rossetti's The Sea Limits, from its reflective cast, offers a favourable chance of comparing his conceptions with those of Browning. An equally specific utterance of view is hardly to be found in Morris. Something is to be judged regarding other Pre-Raphaelites from the faithful landscape background of their pictures. Esther Wood has used this means to bring out the un-Wordsworthian dualism of the Pre-Raphaelite attitude.

Browning's attitude to the external universe is essentially the traditional Christian one. Rudolf Kassner is justified in warning critics against assuming too lightly the necessary religiousness of the literary nature, and against sending Browning, in particular, to the literary-man's church — the temple of Pantheism. Browning's religion is an intensely spiritualised Protestantism. His

interest in the Congregational type of English Protestantism seems the one point at which he touches the institutional life of his nation.

The fact affords an extra point of sympathy with the Pre-Raphaelites. Rossetti was of a pronouncedly religious stock, and in the days of the brotherhood would put in a deliberate appearance at an Anglican service. Holman Hunt's art is a Protestant Christian art. Madox Brown paints Jesus Washes Peter's Feet, Millais Christ in the House of his Parents, Burne-Jones The Star of Bethlehem, and both he and Morris were embryo clergymen, deflected by Rossetti's influence to the painter's calling. Whatever developments this or the other may have undergone in later years, the brotherhood was definitely Christian. Their earnest conception of their calling as painters forbids that they should have painted the above pictures as mere subjects: "their pictures aspire to deal for the first time in English art with the bases and principles of the Christian religion".

The interest of both earlier and later groups is as lively in the case of Browning's religious pieces — Karshish, Christmas Eve and Easter Day, Bishop Blougram's Apology — as in any other section of his work.

With Browning's theology, as such, I do not conceive them to have had much to do. They had not his dissenter's interest in theological system. Rossetti's Christianity, according to Swinburne, is mainly pictorial; and Morris urges Browning's theology against him, in striking a balance between him and Tennyson. But of undeniable influence upon them was, for one thing, the enthusiastic religious temper, as of an earlier day, which makes the name of God, so frequently on Browning's lips, no incongruity: Browning's Pippa Passes on the one hand — in its character of modern miracle cycle — Rossetti's Staff and Scrip or prose-poem Hand and Soul, or various early poems of Morris on the other, are fellow poems, differing

from all other secular poetry of the century — The Dream of Gerontius excepted — by the way in which the Invisible — according to Christian conceptions of it — comes in them to play. They differ from the religious lyric, as such, only in being more thoroughly imaginative.

And of influence upon them, for another thing, was Browning's almost mediæval interest in soul. I say mediæval, because in the Middle Ages souls had a more favourable chance of unfolding: "knights, painters, monks, could glow with great emotions which found one common hearth in religion". "My stress", says Browning already in his preface to Sordello, "lay on the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study". "Let us be unashamed of soul", says he elsewhere. "Shall to produce form out of unshaped stuff be Art — and further, to evoke a soul from form be nothing?" asks Jules, and develops the difference the coming of soul will make. Saving one's soul is a passionate interest in the poems and the letters. Preoccupation with soul accounts for his apparent freak in the choice of subjects. Louis Napoleon, the gamblers and reprobates in The Inn Album, the loose-livers in Red Cotton Nightcap Country, remarks Furnivall, are but cases of diseased souls the poet sets up before his fellow-men for their spirits' gain.

Study of Soul! Little Else Worth Study! Unashamed of Soul! How modern the expressions ring! — as if from yesterday's conversation at the dinner-table: "a later topic, coming in about the same time as the motor-car, is the soul." Browning has come later into vogue because till now before his age. The profoundest note of the present day, according to Ellen Key (The Evolution of the Soul), is its growing will for enhanced power of soul. The most recent article in the New German Review of this personal friend and extoller of the Brownings (Menschen 1904), is a condensation of the Psychic Hygiene of the Danes Fejlberg and Lambek,

under the title, On the Unfolding of the Soul through the Art of Living.

An introductory sketch to her article illustrates the increasingly inward look of European literature since the time of Rousseau and Richardson. Wordsworth's directly psychological expositions, in Tintern Abbey and elsewhere, show in marked manner the trend to inward preoccupation. Shelley, Landor, Carlyle are all awake to the workings of personality. Yet Browning's poems stand out (with Blake's) as peculiarly prophetic of the modern soul interest that Ellen Key detects. Soul occupies them so predominatingly. Observation of external nature, historical research, authenticity of sense impression — all subserves so completely this care for soul.

His bulky volumes constitute one mine of observations for the practical psychologist, of the ways of souls. To most of the principles of the new Art of Soul-Culture they afford cases in point or parallels. "The man of full soul", says the soul-fancier, "never acts against his inner instincts: does not slide into situations which are foreign to his nature, does not fritter himself away on tasks which are alien to his personality". Browning's Pompilia, for her part, from her death-bed, regards the whole tragically ending chain of events in which she has been involved as,

> the whole sad strange plot, the grotesque intrigue
> To make me and my friend unself ourselves,
> Be other man and woman than we were!

Browning's volumes are nurseries of souls for the soul cultivator, showing men on the one hand who, like himself, act at the crux with concentration of all powers into one saving energy, or, like his Luria, stand alone with stout assurance, being "captains of their souls": showing men, on the other hand, of lesser calibre, who achieve soul too late, or only for a time in youth, or, like the heroes of The Statue and the Bust, not at all.

Of special interest in connection with Pre-Raphaelitism are his cases of exaltation and ecstasy — soul-states hitherto associated principally with religion. The intensity we have developed as characteristic of Browning and the school, passes easily over into mysticism. Certain characters of Browning's, without being saints, become exalted above the vicissitudes of things, fortified, as by a talisman, against any more of life's slings and arrows. It is a state encountered, of course, at the end of most great tragedy, the essential invulnerability of the hero's inner being reconciling us, and the dying man himself, to his outward ruin.

Such conscious invulnerability marks several of Browning's characters. "We are past harm now", says Norbert, from out a situation of vague peril. After the soul shocks he and Constance have just undergone, nothing more can in a real sense happen. Even death can no longer really signify, and Norbert's words express the triumph of two persons in the fact. The whole dialogue at this moment is very lyrical. So lyrical is the speech in which the feeling comes to expression, that one may say that the lovers are at one with their lot, embrace the peril that hangs over them, and chant their content with it as does Swinburne's Tannhäuser the praise of Venus.

Mystic invulnerability marks Cristina's Lover and Andrea del Sarto, among other figures of Browning. Outside of Browning the same thing is characteristic, as Kassner has finely developed, of Swinburne's magnificent tragic figures Althæa and Phædra, and, as Simcox brings out, of the queen in the Mary Stuart trilogy. Quiet rapture raises the soulful Marchbanks superior to his bodily fear of Morell in the Pre-Raphaelite Candida by Bernard Shaw.

Earlier Pre-Raphaelite work, literary and pictorial, including such things of Rossetti and Burne-Jones as Lucrezia Borgia, Sidonia von Bork, and Fair Rosamund, is concerned with deeply stirred souls in the manner of Browning. Later Pre-Raphaelite work,

connected especially with Burne-Jones and Rossetti, shows a more passive soul-possession, one marked by a sense of oppression and vague suffering, with which Browning's poems have less to do than have the Marianas and Lady of Shalotts of Tennyson — though even in Browning I find something of the phenomenon in the silver tone-painting of Andrea del Sarto. Rossetti's and Burne-Jones's women are the new soul-bearers characteristic of an age tending, like this, to enhanced soul-power, but yet unadapted and ungracious to it. Soul is still in this later Pre-Raphaelitism the predominant interest, though the soul-types are more at issue with their environment. Rarely has painter put the amount of soul into pictured face that these Pre-Raphaelites do.

This conscious occupation with soul runs through the nineteeth century like a thread, on which Browning and the Pre-Raphaelites are strung. The Æsthetes, in some sense the Pre-Raphaelites' successors, are satirised by Gilbert expressly for intensity and soulfulness — for making postures of the two very things which preponderate in Browning.

Browning is, we have inferred, as keen as any mediæval about the welfare of his soul. But the salvation he aspires after has more than mediæval sanity. The unseen world no longer broods upon the world like a night-mare, and men incarcerate and lacerate themselves no more in the interests of their souls. Conceptions of salvation have changed within the pale of the church. Soul-saving means there more than professing faith and fleeing the world. And Browning's soul-saving is in keeping with the most modern secular principles of soul-culture — between which, however, and definite Christianity he sees no incompatibility. Browning's interest in souls is thus at once a religious and a thoroughly modern one, that breaks down the sharp dividing-line formerly maintained between things sacred and secular, and uses criterions of salvation more liberal

and organic than narrowly interpreted evangelical ones. The criterion, e. g., in The Statue and the Bust, would not appeal to a rigid evangelical.

> I hear you reproach 'But delay was best,
> For their end was crime.' — Oh, a crime will do
> As well, I reply, to serve for a test.

In another way also Browning's interest in soul has more than mediæval sanity — by doing away, as it does, with extreme antagonism between soul and body.

> Let us not always say
> "spite of this flesh today
> I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!'
> As the bird wings and sings
> Let us cry 'All good things
> Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!'

A whole row of poems could be chosen giving, in implicit or explicit form, Browning's ideas of the relations between flesh and soul. And it is in a common theory on this subject that the Pre-Raphaelite school shows itself a school most unmistakeably. To Swinburne, for instance, much that has been adduced as common to Browning and the Pre-Raphaelites does not apply — in particular, all said about minuteness of method. This last point touches Swinburne equally. More modern ideas of the relation of the body to the soul expose him, Rossetti, and Morris, to the same scurrilous attack on the score of Fleshliness.

In accounting for the attraction exercised by Browning upon the Pre-Raphaelites, we have treated his Anticipation of their Rise and Sympathy with their Doctrine as Painters, his Active Interest in Arts Other than that of Poetry, Delight in Pure Colour, Outer to Inner Method, Attitude to External Nature, Interest in Soul, and Definite Christianity. The Mediæval Element in him and his Enthusiasm for Italy remain yet, before we seek traces of literal influence in their work.

His Interest in Soul we have already instanced as a recrudescence of the mediæval temper. His popular

Pippa Passes we described as a modern miracle cycle - the effective revival, i. e., of a mediæval literary type. Its incidents are as pendent from the transcendental workings of "Power" as were those of a miracle series from the redemptive purpose, as conceived by the mediæval playwright.

Count Gismond and The Heretic's Tragedy are endeavours of Browning to put himself dramatically at the standpoint of persons of the Middle Ages. The former is not Browning's most distinctive poem. It suffers from being too purely a reincarnation of normal mediæval humanity — without any dash of moral abnormity about it to excite his powers. Nevertheless the poem by the way it gives back something of the näive confidence of the mediæval person in the issue of a Trial by Combat, and something of the over-charged atmosphere of a feudal court, is an anticipation of Morris's still truer and more strongly divined reconstructions. Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came is at once a poem of quest like Morris's Sir Galahad, and the first of those completions of suggestive snatches of song from Shakespeare affected also by Rossetti, besides being an imaginative tour-de-force characteristic of Browning. The Heretic's Tragedy again, in one point, anticipates a whole important branch of Morris's work — that represented by The Life and Death of Jason and The Earthly Paradise. I speak of successful relations of old legend — mostly classical or Norse — as reflected through the minds of successive story-tellers. Browning's poem is a purposed sample of such reflection, being a glimpse from the burning of Jacques du Bourg-Molay, at Paris, A. D. 1314, "as distorted by the refraction from Flemish brain to brain, during the course of a couple of centuries." This poem is a Browning-like tour-de-force in psychology, quite as much as essay in Mediævalism; and in its first quality

seems to have set a congenial problem to Kipling, as in its second to have incited Morris.

So much for the revival of some definite past. What surprises more in the strenuous Browning than any such reconstruction, is the presence in certain of his lyrics in Paracelsus and in Pippa Passes, of a more remote, ethereal, unconditioned romanticism — a conjuring-up of sensuous nowheres, existent only in the yearnings of persons tired, depressed, or at odds with uncongenial surroundings — that is also precursive of Morris. For instance, where Paracelsus commits his old plans, as being mere beautiful dreams, to the flames, Browning sings:

> such balsam falls
> Down sea-side mountain pedestals,
> From tree-tops where tired winds are fain,
> Spent with the vast and howling main,
> To treasure half their island-gain.

Morris has a place where fair streams are

> drawn from the purple hills afar,
> Drawn down unto the restless sea;
> The hills whose flower ne'er fed a bee,
> The shore no ship has ever seen,
> Still beaten by the billows green —

the place for which, both day and night, the singer cries, in the lyric inserted in Jason.

The delightful sea-wandering in Paracelsus, placed at no definite period of time, to unknown islands of the sea, is a perfect example of the sensuous method of Keats, applied to a subject such as Morris afterwards chose. The senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, the sense of material, are all appealed to surely, as in Jason or The Earthly Paradise:

> Each bark built out of a forest-tree
> Left leafy and rough as first it grew,
> And nailed all over the gaping sides,
> Within and without, with black bull-hides,
> Seethed in fat and suppled in flame,
> To bear the playful billows' game.

Heaving sea, playful billows, dancing brine, the wondrous tent on board, are already in Morris's objective manner. But the tired evening glow suffusing the whole is of Morris too, and marks a correspondence of mood in the two authors. It is in a breathing-time between frenzies of heroic effort that Paracelsus sings the beautiful romance of weariness, "sad rhyme of the men who proudly clung to their first fault and withered in their pride;" and it is in just such an interlude in Morris's own strenuous life that Jason and The Earthly Paradise are written. In just such a transition time it is that Morris, disagreeing with the economic principles of his age and grieved by its ugliness, becomes "the idle singer of an empty day", sings strange idle romances of quest by land and sea, before girding himself to set the crooked straight, through politics and agitation.

The third lyric foreshadowing Morris's idle singer period, is that song by Pippa about the old King and the Python in the morning of the world. The picture it gives is of just one of those early Greek city communities in Thrace or the islands of the Ægean, touched at by Jason in the course of his adventure. The scenic elements of Pippa's song and of Orpheus's lyric of return in Jason are the same. Orpheus sings:

> What soul within the house shall rest
> When we come home? The wily king
> Shall leave his throne to see the thing;
> No man shall keep the landward gate,
> The hurried traveller shall wait
> Until our bulwarks graze the quay,
> Unslain the milk-white bull shall be
> Beside the quivering altar-flame;
> Scarce shall the maiden clasp for shame
> Over her breast the raiment thin
> The morn that Argo cometh in.

Attractive to Rossetti, and to Swinburne specially, must have been Browning's enthusiasm for Italy. Mazzini's

reading of The Italian in England to fugitive compatriots, to show how an Englishman could share the spirit of their cause, is a matter of common knowledge; and Mazzini was Swinburne's master. The poem mentioned affected Rossetti's work as much as any other single poem by its author. Browning's enthusiasm for the Italian cause is elsewhere noticeable; it is in de Gustibus and in Pippa Passes (third section) where Luigi, an intending assassin in the national cause, is treated as a sympathetic figure. Renaissance and mediæval studies dealing with Italy are abundant.

The Italian in England and Rossetti's A Last Confession affected by it, bring us to the question of the precise traces of Browning's influence that are to be detected in the writings of the Pre-Raphaelites; for A Last Confession is the most conspicuous example of such influence. The poem is compact of Browningite suggestions. Walter Raleigh terms it "A dramatic monologue, not unlike some of Browning's, but built round a single impression — the sense of horror awakened in the soul by the sound of a coarse, empty laugh, which reveals, as no sight can reveal it, the abode of lost souls".

But does this judgment fairly state the debt to Browning? Is not the building round a laugh less a point of difference between Browning and Rossetti than an additional resemblance? The laugh that decides the fate of the girl seems a conscious elaboration of an effect in Pippa Passes, where the mirth of the ill-disposed students breaks in upon Jules's exultation:

> Oh, to hear
> God's voice plain as I heard it first, before
> They broke in with their laughter! I heard them
> Henceforth, not God —

says Jules; and the youth in Rossetti's poem confesses —

> Father, you heard my speech and not her laugh;
> But God heard that. Will God remember all?

The laugh is in both never to be forgotten. But in Rossetti the laugh of the harlot is a chan ceone, indelibly

impressed, because received by startled senses, and therefore fateful: and in this fact we have another echo from the same poem of Browning's, with its fortuitous but fateful songs of Pippa. Harlot's laugh plays the part of girl's songs. The fatefulness of sound, after Pippa Passes, becomes almost a stock device. In The Awakened Conscience it is a song that effects the awakening. Chastelard's songs have an ominous note, and actually bring doom.

The fate of Rossetti's foundling recalls again that of Browning's Porphyria. Prevention is paramount with Porphyria's lover — the anticipation and thwarting of threatened degradation. Here also. The young patriot kills deliriously, blindly, scarcely knowing what he was doing — yet ultimately with some such purpose — of saving the girl from depths she threatens to descend into:

> And three hours afterwards
> When she that I had run all risks to meet
> Laughed as I told you, my life burned to death
> Within me, for I thought it like the laugh
> Heard at the fair. She had not left me long;
> But all she might have changed to or might change to
> (I know nought since — she never speaks a word)
> Seemed in that laugh.

Monologue form, laugh, momentous chance effects of it, motive of the girl's fate — all these are elements of first-rate importance recalling Browning. Correspondences less crucial are that both poems deal with hunted heroes in their struggle with Metternich in Lombardy; and that Metternich is so pronouncedly the bugbear of both patriots. Browning's hero, if he could have his wish, would grasp Metternich, until he felt "his red wet throat distil in blood through his two hands". Rossetti's patriot speaks of Metternich, in his shut palace, sitting clean above the splash of blood, and would have his soul die, "and never-dying worms feast on its pain for ever".

Both poems contain milieu-painting of Lombardy. Esther Wood speaks of the Italy of Rossetti's wonderful fragment as par excellence Browning's Italy.

The stories agree in incident in so far that Browning's and Rossetti's fugitives have to throw themselves in time of pressure upon the patriotism of the common people — a peasant woman's in Browning, a travelling mountebank's in Rossetti. Again in the noble peasant woman, who risks all for the cause, Browning sees Italy herself, just as Rossetti sees in the magnificent girl and the Madonna in the church at Monza,

> Two kindred forms whereby our land
> (Whose work still serves the world for miracle)
> Made manifest herself in womanhood.

Further Browning echoes in details we have in the stepping of the child's parents into the sun, recalling Waring's going off with a bound "into the rosy and golden half of the sky, to overtake the sun and reach the shore".

Delineation of Italian patriotism we get from both authors under two aspects; first, in the way it absorbs a man's energies; and, second, in its heightening to delirium. As for the delirium, Luigi in Pippa Passes argues if his mind be not touched, and laughs to himself as through the town he walks, and sees men merry, as if no Italy were suffering. He has springing and melody and giddiness as he goes, and auricular delusions about the earth around him; while to Rossetti's patriot the struggle has become —

> A game to play, a love to clasp, a hate
> To wreak, ... till at times
> All else seemed shadows, and I wondered still
> To see such life pass muster and be deemed
> Time's bodily substance.

Browning-like is the grim theological humour of Rossetti's account of the Austrians in battle.

> The devil makes them wear
> White for a livery, that the blood may show
> Braver that brings them to him. So he looks
> Sheer o'er the field and knows his own at once.

Browning-like finally is the close of the confession, recalling the abrupt finish of Porphyria's Lover. God stands as the ultimate judge of the murders in both. The overwrought lover, after Porphyria has been strangled, waits for God to speak; and the remorseful lover in A Last Confession, after succeding with terrible difficulty in relating what is on his conscience, in his last hallucination sees only the towering figure of the murdered girl in her dramatic appeal to God.

It is no exaggeration then to describe the poem as a procession of Browning-like motives and details. It remains, before passing on, to point out that the subject in its entirety is after the heart of Browning. It is a case of "Rettung", or rehabilitation, such as Browning himself affects — the rehabilitation of a condemned man in more than the respect of all readers. Rossetti takes what is at first sight a case of vulgar jealousy and murder, probes it, and brings to light the singular bravery, humanity and purity of the murderer — qualities with which no vulgar jealousy assorts.

The debts of Rossetti even in this most influenced poem do not render the work merely imitative. The poem is intenser than The Italian in England — showing use of the legitimate arts we have instanced, to heighten intensity; and more normally human than Porphyria's Lover — from Browning's madhouse cells.

The poem has besides the suffused glow of colour and the largeness of seeing, which characterise the imagination of Rossetti. The figures appear to be seen from nearer to — to be drawn on a larger scale — than the corresponding ones in Browning.

One regrets after reading this poem that Rossetti should have abandoned the realistic vein so soon. Whether it was expressly to assert his independence of Browning, one cannot say. The superfluousness of such a step is apparent from the difference in likeness of A Last Confession. As it is, the realistic vein in Rossetti's genius

remains a hardly exploited one of great worth, prematurely abandoned for others perhaps inferior.

Another of the longer poems recalling Browning is Jenny, a contemplation of a fallen woman. We are told by W. M. Rossetti that the poem was begun early, and was originally without the slight framework of incident which now encloses it; also that the image of the toad in the stone was one of the original parts of the poem. But for this information one would have connected this important image with Browning's newt "shut up inside a stone", or the lizard "breathing for ages safe" mentioned in Christmas Eve and Easter Day; for the comparison is no every-day one with poets. Rossetti published too late to have given the image to Browning. The framework – superimposed, recall, as an afterthought — appears to me to have been suggested to Rossetti by Browning's Evelyn Hope. Browning's speaker sits in the darkened room by the bedside of the dead girl and contemplates and thinks aloud, before pressing his gift into her hand; Rossetti's sits and watches by the sleeping girl through the London night, and contemplates, likewise, and reflects aloud, before putting his gift into her hair and coming away. . Both poems fling into their subject with a strongly emphasised first syllable and with a girl's name qualified adjectivally. The irregular four-beat measure, with rhymes sometimes in twos, sometimes in threes, sometimes alternated, is a Browningite measure found in Time's Revenges and in Waring. The ring of the whole first section of Jenny is like Browning in its gay energy, its fine worldliness a quality which, as a rule, he could not communicate to the Romantics. The very bad joke in the last lines —

> Poor shameful Jenny, full of grace
> Thus with your head upon my knee; —
> Whose person or whose purse may be
> The lode-star of your reverie?

recalls Browning rather than its perpetrator. Browning scatters such about in pure exuberance of gaiety, e. g., in The Flight of the Duchess —

> So, all that the old Dukes had been without knowing it,
> This Duke would fain know he was without being it.

The influence of Browning seems clear in Rossetti's earlier lyrics also — in those more dramatic ones. There is a period when Rossetti's songs are more really dramatic, just as in his more sustained poetry one period is characterised by dramatic monologue or dialogue. Even So, An Old Song Ended, the lyric in A Last Confession, Three Shadows, Sudden Light, Penumbra, The Sea-Limits — all from Rossetti's earlier published volume — have this dramatic quality.

Even So treats of a breach between lovers — a more hopeless, more irrevocable one than Browning treats. This temperamental difference is usual. The poem involves a Browningism — Benson notes it — in that a picture is inserted in the middle of the song. —

> But the sea stands spread
> As one wall with the flat skies,
> Where the lean black craft like flies
> Seem well-nigh stagnated,
> Soon to drop off dead.

One of the few traces of influence upon Swinburne is a similar insertion --

> I never loved white roses much; but see
> How the wind drenches the low lime-branches
> With shaken silver in the rainiest leaves.

In a somewhat similar theme to Rossetti's above, in the poem A Lost Mistress, Browning's lover halts in his woe to notice the state of the leaf-buds. But insertion of this kind is a regular Browning idiosyncrasy. That the impression came to Rossetti during a visit to the South coast we know; so that Browning's being likewise struck by "the great opaque blue breadth of sea without a break," is a coincidence.

The lyric in A Last Confession has just the kind of dramatic love-monologue found in A Womans Last Word, In a Gondola, A Lovers' Quarrel. "What", asks Rossetti's heroine about her dazzling arms and shoulders, "What are words said for at all about them, if he they are made for can do without them?" And again, "Oh! does he love me, when my voice teaches the very speeches he then spoke of me?" — questions readily paralleled out of the cited lyrics of Browning. The question is, when the lyric was inserted in the Confession. If the criticism to which Rossetti exposes it in 1869, from Christina Rossetti and others, denotes recent composition with a view to the Confession's appearance in the volume of 1870, well and good: the citation of all three lyrics of Browning is cogent. If the lyric was already there in 1854, by which date the Confession was written, In a Gondola alone could have been known to Rossetti.

Penumbra is formally somewhat related to Browning's One Way of Love; the subject, a temperamental variation of the same theme — the relating of ill-starred love; the stanza, a modification of Browning's by the omission of a line from the middle couplet; and a phrase in the second stanza probably an echo of Browning's last stanza in still another treatment of the same theme, A Lost Mistress.

In one other work of Rossetti's is the influence of Browning distinctly traceable — in Hand and Soul, the prose-poem written in 1850 for the first number of The Germ. We have alluded already to the fact that its environment is that of Browning's Sordello. Chiaro dell' Erma, like Browning's Guidone, is a dizzy painter of the Italian efflorescence out of barbarism. The fact too of the work's being an artist-biography points to an impulse from Sordello. But these are points obvious and external. More important is that Paracelsus and

Pippa Passes both contribute to the counsel given by Chiaro's ghostly visitant.

Chiaro has gained fame as a painter in Tuscany and become dissatisfied with it attained. He has then taken a new aim to his life and has presented only embodiments of moral greatness — multiplying abstractions and forgetting the beauty and passion of the world: to his further mortification, for his allegory of Peace runs with the blood of inattentive combatants. It is for this his feet have become weary and his hands thin. The complete failure of this his didactic period is represented to us through the fact that none of its results have come down to us. With other works of his the story is supposed to deal.

His case recalls that of Paracelsus, who also wanted to serve mankind from a pedestal; who longed, "at once to trample on and save mankind." What Chiaro's ghostly mentor impresses on him is much what experience of life has taught Paracelsus. Paracelsus has learned Humility. He has come to regard men sympathetically, "to trace love's faint beginnings in mankind, to know even hate is but a mask of love's, to see a good in evil, and a hope in ill-success." He looks for a better-tempered spirit to come after him, warned by his fate to be more patient with man's faint aspirings, dim struggles for truth, weak upward-tending. It is such a better-tempered spirit that Chiaro's disembodied soul admonishes him to be. Instead of speaking frigidly, ex cathedrà, in cold allegory, he is to speak warmly and sensuously, from the heart simply, in such fashion that the crowds will throng about his pictures as heretofore. "Only by making thyself his" (man's) "equal can he learn to hold communication with thee and at last own thee above him. Not till thou lean over the water shalt thou see thine image therein. Stand erect and it shall slope from thy feet and be lost."

So much with regard to the painter's attitude to men. His work has however a bearing with respect to God, the consideration of which leads to Pippa Passes. Chiaro has to beware of thinking "I in doing this do strengthen God among men." He need not hesitate to give up his cold embodiments of moral greatnesses for fear of withdrawing a support from God in the world. Miltonically stated, "God does not need either man's work or his own gifts." Pippa's only service to God on her holiday has been to be glad, and yet her service has been a surprisingly effective one.

> All service ranks the same with God —
> With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
> Are we: there is no last nor first.

Her Only Service to be Glad, sums up Pippa Passes in a phrase; and the same thing, translated into terms of the painter's life, is the substance of Hand and Soul. Live truly and paint something from your heart simply! Never mind about worshiping God! True life is the truest worship and the truest praise, for with God is no lust of Godhead! This, Rossetti's prose-poem would impress upon painters.

That Humility and Naturalness — both Pre-Raphaelite watchwords — should have been imprinted so unmistakeably on these early works of Browning, shows how intimate a sympathy bound him and the brotherhood.

One point still remains in connection with this prose-poem – the point noted by W. M. Rossetti when he writes, "In the conversation of the foreign art students forming the epilogue, Rossetti may well have been not wholly oblivious of the scene in Pippa Passes, a prime favourite of his. There is however no sort of imitation; and Rossetti's dialogue is markedly more natural.

To pass to Morris! Morris's first work, The Defence of Guenevere and other Poems, divides into three main classes of poems: first, Arthurian Romance,

marked by all the glow of chivalry and catholic mythology; second, Lyrics; third, Froissart Studies — a gallery of mediæval characters — Jehane, Sir Peter Harpdon, John of Newcastle, Geffray Teste-noire etc., — that do on a small scale, for just Froissart's age, what Shakespeare did in his history plays for our later Middle Ages.

For the first group, with their passion and delirium, "their air charged with the fiery heat of noonday," the suggestions are to be found in Browning rather than in the Idylls of Tennyson. Browning's mediæval pieces show the intuition of the mediæval point of view and the over-charged atmosphere, which in an intensified form are the prominent characteristics of Morris's volume. Swinburne marks the first characteristic — intuition of the mediæval point of view — as present in the Defence poem, when he writes, "The mediæval point of view is reproduced in its irreconcileables — repentances as real as desire, shame as deep as love, remorse for sin, and regret all the time that the pleasure is past": and as for the sultry over-passionate atmosphere of feudal life, illustrations are abundant. Guenevere, for instance, on her defence before her judges, is "tormented and awry with passion." Fire quivers yards above her head at the tournament where Launcelot kills Mellyagraunce. She rises up weak, pale and sick, cannot speak, tries to shriek but cannot, and falls down swooning, when the brawling breaks up her dream with Launcelot.

The description of the combat in Morris's Guenevere poem consists of about the same small number of trenchant pen-strokes as does Browning's in Count Gismond. Half-a-dozen lines suffice each to realise with flashing vividness a combat in the lists,

> And e'ven before the trumpet's sound
> Was finished, prone lay the false knight
> Prone as his lie, upon the ground:
> Gismond flew at him, used no sleight

O' the sword but open-breasted drove
Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

So writes Browning, against which Morris sets,

The fight began and to me they drew nigh;
Ever Sir Launcelot kept him on the right
And traversed warily and ever high
And fast leapt caitiff's sword until my knight
Sudden threw up his sword to his left hand
Caught it and swung it; that was all the fight
Except a spout of blood on the hot sand.

Those flashed descriptions of Swinburne's, of men under weigh of motion, such, for example, as that of the gathering hunt in Atalanta, in which Kassner detects the schooling his senses have had among the Pre-Raphaelites, find their prototypes to my mind rather in such dynamic flashes out of Browning, and after him Morris, than in the more stationary objectivity of Rossetti and Keats.

There may be a recollection of a detail from Browning's Andrea del Sarto in Guenevere's description of the garden in which she walked with her ladies:

A quiet garden walled round every way:
I was right joyful of that wall of stone
That shut the flowers and trees up with the sky,
And trebled all the beauty.

Andrea notes as an artistic effect,

That length of convent wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside.

It was possibly Browning's example in the apocalyptical Christmas Eve and Easter Day that emboldened the youthful Morris to introduce Christ in person into his Christmas mystery Sir Galahad; for the idea of Morris's best line — the impossibility of not recognising Christ — is turned to account previously by Browning; Morris has simply improved upon it. In Browning's poem, after the evolution from the glory of the moon-rainbow, the poet looks up in terror;

He was there.
No face: only the sight
Of a sweepy garment, vast and white,
With a hem that I could recognise.

Morris's Sir Galahad, staggering half-blind after the something has passed by, with his sense of awe increasing at every step, sees —

One sitting on the altar as a throne
Whose face no man could say he did not know.

Again in Easter Day, when Christ speaks, the poet "falls before his feet, a mass, no man now," rather anticipating Sir Galahad's falling upon the floor and kneeling,

Not as one kneels in church when mass is said
But in a heap, quite nerveless, for I felt
The first time what a thing was perfect dread.

The third section that we have distinguished in The Defence of Guenevere, that comprising the Froissart pictures, is a kind of supplement to Browning's Men and Women. Browning's volume had appeared in 1855, so that these poems were written by Morris while Men and Women was still a novelty; Morris had just reviewed it in The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine.

Morris's group of people is less cosmopolitan than his master's, being limited to the decline of the English predominance in France, whereas Browning ranges all history, the most modern included. The gallant piteous upholders of the decaying cause seem to engage Morris's sympathies irresistibly. But despite this difference, the book is a group of character-portrayals in the manner of Men and Women.

Sir Peter Harpdon, for instance, in the poem Sir Peter Harpdon's End, is a Browning man in spirit. He likes the straining game of striving well to hold up things that fall; so one becomes great.

He admires the Trojans in their heroic struggle to keep Helen —

> There! they were wrong, as wrong as men could be;
> For, as I think, they found it such delight
> To see fair Helen going through the town:
> Yea, any little common thing she did
> (As stooping to pick up a flower) seemed so strange,
> So new in its great beauty, that they said:
> 'Here we will keep her living in this town,
> Till all burns up together.' And so, fought,
> In a mad whirl of knowing they were wrong;
> Yea, they fought well, and ever, like a man
> That hangs legs off the ground by both his hands,
> Over some great height, did they struggle sore,
> Quite sure to slip at last; wherefore, take note
> How almost all men, reading that sad siege,
> Hold for the Trojans; as I did at least,
> Thought Hector the best knight a long way.

This passage is pure Browning, in the mood in which he cries,

> Oh a crime will do
> As well, I say, to serve for a test.

Again Sir Peter's putting his case to himself so pat, his reasoned determination to stick to the side of English usurpation, just for the loyalty of it, though it obviously involves failure and death — simply because to do so is the great course to take — reminds one of the magnanimous resolution and suicide of Browning's Luria.

A technical point in Sir Peter Harpdon's End reminds us still further that it was Browning's theatre that served as model to Morris's first dramatic effort. It is the manner in which Alice de la Barde anticipates wrongly what Clisson's squire is about to relate — a device occurring in Colombe's Birthday, and elsewhere in Browning.

The employment of John of Douay in The Statue and the Bust may have suggested that of Jaques Picard in Morris's Concerning Geffray Teste Noire,

There did I lay them, every wearied bone;
And over it they lay, with stone-white hands
Clasped fast together, hair made bright with gold,
This Jaques Picard, known through many lands,
Wrought cunningly. He's dead now — I am old —

an abrupt ending in the style of Browning.

Browning-like lastly, in form and subject, is The Judgment of God: in form, as being an unsuccessful attempt to use a Browning medium; the piece is a clumsy monologue wanting in perspicuity — a want triumphantly made good when Morris turns to direct narrative, in The Haystack in the Floods. It is Browning-like in subject, in that it is the study of a dishonest knight: Browning patronises unsympathetic characters.

The last of the men associated with the Pre-Raphaelite movement whom Browning had influence upon, is Swinburne. But the influence is comparatively slight — restricted, but for the friendly atmosphere that Browning helped to create for some sections of his work, to a few stylistic peculiarities, confined for the most part to his 1860 drama Rosamund. Browning created a taste for an intenser type of character, urged the claims of the body against a one-sided spirituality, and trumpeted the praise of Italy almost to the point of injustice to his own land, in so far paving the way for Swinburne, perhaps even fostering, in the directions specified, tendencies born with the younger poet. But that is the full measure of Browning's service to him, and there is much in Swinburne that is alien to Browning and the Pre-Raphaelites.

The mannerisms caught up into the dialogue of Rosamund hardly merit any lengthy retailing. There is, for example, Browning's abruptness and parenthesis in the following passage,

Who says
I am at waste? — look, since last night! — for me,
I care not though you get through all they said.

All this side dashed with fits of weeping time,
See you, the red struck out; an evil year.

A case of inserted picture we have noted in treating Rossetti's Even So. Here, lastly, is an example of compression of style, as common in Sordello —

Who says my trick that, played on either, makes
Music for me and sets my head on work,
Is devil's lesson?

— an ending right reminiscent of Browning.

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